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MEMORANDUM

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

INFORMATION
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June 23, 1972

MEMORANDUM FOR: GENERAL HAIG

FROM: HAROLD H. SAUNDERS *7/2/72*

SUBJECT: Background for Your Talk with Kurdish Leaders

Dick Helms has sent the attached background memorandum for the talk which you and he will have with the Kurdish emissaries. I assume he is in touch with you on the timing.

The attached is so easily read that I will not summarize it here. The most useful thing I can do is to point out the main considerations that would go into a decision for providing some of the \$1.5 million monthly subsidy or "moral support" that the Kurdish leaders are looking for:

--The major view in town is that we should stay out of direct support for the Kurds. As Helms understands it, the Iranian intelligence service has already committed the Iranians to paying half of the subsidy [REDACTED]. In short, there is enough money in the area to do this and this is one case where we could well leave this effort to local initiative.

--The second major point to consider is that what the Kurds really want to do is to get from the US some indication of support that they can noise around the Middle East. So anything we do in the way of "moral support" cannot by its nature stay quiet because if it were to do Barzani any good he would have to tell others. This would put us semi-openly into one of the longest ongoing guerrilla wars in the Middle East.

--On the other hand, there is a certain attraction to trying to help the Kurds maintain some independence of the Iraqi government so that they can keep the Soviets from helping the Baath party consolidate its rule and relationship with the Communists in Iraq. However, admitting the desirability of any reasonable effort to thwart the Soviets, the question remains whether US support is essential to the success of the effort. The Kurds have kept their position with Iranian and

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[REDACTED] support for a number of years, and the US could well take the position that this is a case for the regional countries most interested to continue. If we provide moral support, perhaps it should be in the form of acknowledged acquiescence expressed directly to them rather than to support for the Kurds.

Your main purpose in seeing these fellows will be simply to hear them out and to enable Henry to send some reflections back to the Shah after hearing their case.

I might add that I have had several feelers from some of these Kurdish emissaries and so far have turned them aside. If you would like, I would be glad to go with you to this meeting with Helms and these emissaries.

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